

**Subject:** Gold King Mine Release - Regional Update #6

**Date:** 15 August 2015

### **Background**

The Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado has had a continuous discharge of acidic mine drainage that is a historic contributor of manganese, zinc, copper, and cadmium into the Cement Creek drainage of the Animas River watershed. On August 5, 2015, an estimated 3 million gallons of mine wastewater released into the upper portions of Cement Creek, and into the Animas River.

### **Executive Summary**

- EPA Region 9 is focused on assessing the impacts of the release along a stretch of the San Juan River extending from Farmington, NM, to Mexican Hat, UT, and into Lake Powell
- EPA Region 9 continues to provide an alternative water supply and hay to the Navajo Tribal Utility Agency (NTUA) for agriculture and livestock
- EPA Region 9 continues to coordinate with representatives from the Navajo Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the States of AZ, Utah, NM, and federal agencies Bureau of Recreation, the National Park Service, and US Geological Survey

Unless specified otherwise all dates & times are in Pacific Daylight Time (PDT). For previous information please see the Documents Section of the operations website: [www.epaossc.org/R9\\_SanJuanRiverResponse](http://www.epaossc.org/R9_SanJuanRiverResponse)

### **Current Actions**

- R9 is continues surface water and sediment sampling along the San Juan River in the Navajo Nation at 11 monitoring sites.
- R9 Lab personnel placing 8-Sondes for collecting water quality information (pH, conductivity, turbidity) at the surface water sampling locations
- R9 will collect surface water and sediment samples at the confluence of San Juan River where it enters Lake Powell this weekend (8/15-16)
- On August 13, in addition to gathering shoreline samples, teams performed an assessment to determine locations that could serve as entry/exit points for air boats and other small water craft. No samples have been taken from the middle of the river yet although it is planned that today samples will be taken from the middle of the river
- EPA (R9) continues providing over 50,000 gallons of water per day to designated distribution areas identified by NTUA.
- Region 9 has supplied over 384 bales of hay to Navajo Nation chapter locations for livestock

Public meetings and outreach:

- R9 Community Involvement Coordinators (CIC) continue to provide outstanding public outreach and communication across the Navajo Nation. They continue to hold public meetings with Chapter Houses.
- On 8/15 a joint chapter meeting will be held in Nenahnezad, and is anticipated to include Upper Fruit Land, Hogback, Nenahnezad, and Gadii Ahi. On 8/14 NN meetings were held with the Aneth Chapter (30 in attendance) and the Oljeto Chapter (120 in attendance).
- 8/14 Press Release from the City of Durango announced that the City had resumed pumping raw water for water drinking water treatment and distribution after independent sampling results supported such a decision.
- On 8/14 La Plata County, CO issued a media advisory opening the Animas River for recreational use. The decision was based on data from the CO Health Dept. that levels of contaminants are below those that would be of concern for recreational use.
- The State of New Mexico issued news advisories on 8/14 lifting the ban on domestic well water use in the Animas floodplain, and flushing irrigation ditches as a safety precaution prior to resuming irrigation for agriculture and livestock.

- Region 6, 8, 9 are continues to hold joint Regional Response Team calls with State and Federal Agencies for situational updates.
- R9 response personnel held successful meetings with AZ Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick, the Mayor and the Chamber of Commerce of Page, AZ.

**Personnel On-Site**

6 R9 OSCs

1 R10 OSC

1 R9 PIO

5 R9 CIC

2 R9 LNC/LNO

1 R9 Laboratory

4 USCG PST

**Key Issues**

- We don't expect impacts to Lake Powell but are waiting for sampling results to confirm